



**Testimony before the Committee on Public Health  
of the Connecticut General Assembly  
on H.B. No. 5038,  
An Act Implementing The Recommendations Of The Hospital Task Force**

**Monday March 3, 2008**

**Arthur W. Brodeur  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Windham Community Memorial Hospital**

**I am Art Brodeur, Chair of the Board of Directors of Windham Hospital. I am also a former First Selectman of the Town of Eastford and am retired from the position of Special Assistant to the Chancellor at the University of Connecticut.**

**I welcome the opportunity to urge you to consider and report favorably on House Bill No. 5038, whose purpose is to implement the recommendations of the Governor's Strategic Task Force on Hospitals, on which I was privileged to serve as a public member and as the only representative from Eastern Connecticut. Our common goal, and we represented myriad and varied constituencies, was to assure that hospitals in Connecticut survive and improve**

**This bill affords you the opportunity to have a significant legislative and societal impact, much greater, more far-reaching, and with much more profound life or death implications than matters such as clothes lines and highway billboards. For, in the final analysis, H.R. 5038 is not about hospitals but rather about caring for the people of Connecticut, caring for your constituents, for the people of Manchester, and Milford and New London and Kent and Waterford and Windsor Locks and Bridgeport and Scotland and all of Connecticut's cities and towns. As Dr. Atul Gawande says in the introduction to his very impressive book titled *Better, A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*, "lives are on the line so our decisions are moral in nature."**

**Windham Community Memorial Hospital in Willimantic is a 130 bed licensed acute care facility serving a 19-town service area with an annual budget of \$80 million. This year we are celebrating our 75<sup>th</sup> year of service. We are a community hospital and we are deeply devoted to Family Centered Care.**

**Windham Hospital has been designated by Medicare as a rural hospital and serves many rural communities yet due to its location in Willimantic, we face many challenges similar to those of larger urban communities. We serve significant percentages of uninsured including undocumented persons, and in the most recent fiscal year nearly 17 percent of our volume was for Medicaid beneficiaries. Our hospital has been among the lowest cost hospitals on a case mix adjusted basis. We continue to pursue efficiency of operation and attempt to achieve value for all our patients and families through aggressive labor productivity programs and benchmarking against best practice institutions across the country. We are engaged in the process of potential affiliation with Hartford Health Care Corporation and we look forward eagerly to the systems benefits which such an affiliation will bring.**

**Unfortunately, when our full costs are not covered through the Medicaid program, there is a diminished ability to produce the necessary income to reinvest in technology, plant and equipment. Indeed, hospital financial analysts indicate that hospitals need to achieve a five percent annual operating margin to fulfill their mission and ensure financial success. Unfortunately, there are very few acute care hospitals in Connecticut which have consistently met that operating margin level of performance over multiple years.**

**We at Windham Hospital contend that health care is an entitlement, not a privilege; and ensuring the health of all citizens is a moral and professional obligation which benefits a nation, and therefore a state, economically and**

fosters a more just society. We all acknowledge there is a definite and defined need to improve the availability of quality health care, to assure access to that care, and to foster efficiency and innovation in its provision. This acknowledgement is reflected in the common themes proceeding from the health care discussions on the State level in such venues as House Speaker Amman's health forums and in the deliberations of Governor Rell's Task Force. These discussions are beyond and above partisanship for there is a common and necessary imperative: assuring access to, and provision of, the best possible healthcare for the citizens of Connecticut.

As the Task Force report stated: There is not a single solution to ensure hospital financial viability, but a combination of strategies will need to be applied before success can be realized. Connecticut has a strong health care delivery system that provides excellent care; the Governor's Task force focused on the areas of weakness within the system and provided 29 robust recommendations that should have a lasting impact. These recommendations fall into three categories: financial structure of the health care delivery system, utilization and planning, and workforce issues, and many of them have been transmuted into the legislation you are considering today.

H.G. Wells once wrote, in *The Outline of History*, that "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe. " I would contend that today, human history or civilization has become a race between the provision of quality health care and catastrophe. We are all in that race together, and we must win. Here in Connecticut, we need you if we are going to win. We are counting on you, as legislative implementers, to help us get to the finish line, to help us get it done. Thank you.

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